

IMAGES OF GOD IN ABUSED AND NONABUSED
COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Images of God in Abused and Nonabused College Students

An Abstract of a Thesis by

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The Problem. This study investigated differences in abused college student's perceptions of God, their parents and family, and themselves. It was hypothesized that persons who had been abused would view God, their parents and family, and themselves more negatively.

Procedure. This study examined 134 abused and 51 nonabused college students' perceptions through self-report questionnaires assessing their reports of abuse, and their perceptions of God, their parents and family, and themselves.

Findings. The abused group saw their mothers, fathers, and families significantly more negatively than the nonabused group. The two groups did not differ in their views of God or themselves. A set of hierarchical regression analyses demonstrated that sexual abuse was predictive of a deistic and worthless view of God and the mother image as being the most predictive of the image of God.

Conclusions. Persons who have experienced sexual abuse tend to have a view of God as deistic and worthless. A person who has experienced abuse, in any form, appears to view their parents and family more negatively than nonabused persons.

Recommendations. Further research is needed in understanding what factors influence God images. Also, more reliable and valid measures need to be found for measuring both abuse occurrences and God images.

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CHAPTER I

When the word "God" is stated, those who believe in God, interpret or perceive their own image of God. The image created may be of a loving God or it may be of a God sitting in judgment of the world or any other image possible. This image is the cornerstone of a person's relationship with God and with religion. For the religious person, this image will have a strong influence in how he or she understands the world and human nature. This makes it essential for professionals working with people, especially religious people, to understand their images of God.

A person's image of God is the representation he or she holds of God. The representation contains the essential elements people believe God contains. This includes any descriptions people give to God. For example, the image of God may include how God relates to people, or God's characteristics.

The image of God is formed during childhood, usually by the age of eighteen. Children as young as three years old have described their images of God (Harms, 1944). Many theories have tried to explain the development of the God image. All the theories center around the family as the major influence in the image formation.

Freud was one of the first people to theorize about the development of the God image. Freud believed the image was created out of the Oedipus conflict. The male child projected his experiences with his father onto God. Over time this father image of God became memory traces in males and was cross inherited from males to females. Freud termed these father-God images the primal father image. The individual's relationship with his or her own father activated the primal father

image. The primal image combined with the personal father image to make up the God image. Ultimately the image of God is merely an exalted father image (Rizzuto, 1974).

James Fowler (1981) divided the development of faith into six stages. The first four stages included a description of the formation of the image of God. Within each stage the God image develops and becomes more complex. A person may complete a stage and move on to a more complex God image or remain in a lower stage.

Prior to the formal stages, a stage labeled "infancy undifferentiated faith" occurs. Within this phase infants have pre-images of God. The pre-images are based on mutuality, trust, autonomy, hope, and courage in the people providing primary care. These traits underlie the development of the God image. If a child does not experience these traits, Fowler predicts the child will show isolation and failed mutuality.

The first formal stage, intuitive-projective faith, takes place in children ages two to six or seven. The main focus of this stage is imagination. The child is exposed to God through stories, television, or conversation. This exposure begins the formation of God images. The images are primarily influenced by the examples, moods, actions, and stories of the primary caregivers. This exposure to the idea of God is taken in by the imaginative child and is turned into his or her image of God. Once the images are created they are long lasting.

The mythic-literal stage, stage two, lasts from age seven to puberty. During this stage the image of God becomes orderly. The child may describe physical, concrete images of God, such as God having white hair. The God image reflects

the child's culture and the parental relationship. The child will take all of his/her parents' behavior and incorporate it into his/her God image. During this stage the child relies on reciprocity, that is, if the child does good things, God will do good things to him or her.

The third stage, synthetic-conventional faith, is where many people stop in their image of God. The formation of the image of God is based on interpersonal qualities. God becomes more personal to the individual. The image comes from what he or she has been taught and from what he or she feels. The image closely resembles the image held by significant others in the child's life. Deficiencies, such as poor interpersonal development, in this stage can create despair about a personal God or produce a compensatory intimacy with God.

Stage four, individuative-reflective faith, is the last stage in the development of the God image. During this stage a person looks at his or her assumptive images objectively. A realization occurs that the person's images of God were based on his or her culture and environment. The person must discover that he or she possesses his or her own internal authority. Fowler labeled this the emergence of an executive ego. The person looks critically at the image of God held and puts personal meaning behind the image.

A third way of viewing the development of the image of God is through attachment theory. Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) proposed two hypotheses about how attachment theory was related to the God image. One hypothesis was that the image of a loving, personal, available God was a substitute for the secure attachment that some people never made with their parents. A second hypothesis was that a child's early relationships make the foundation for future relationships,

including the relationship with God. Therefore, the models of the early attachment relationships give the basis for the image of God.

All three of these theories have one common theme in the development of the image of God. The common theme is the family, specifically the parent/s. The relationship the child has with his or her parent/s is theorized to influence his or her image of God. If these theories are correct, the behavior of the parent/s could affect how a person perceives God. This has significant implication for a child physically, sexually or emotionally abused by his or her parent/s. The child abused by his or her parent/s may incorporate the parent/s abusive behavior into his or her parental images. These image would then be transfered to his or her image of God.

Research has not looked at the influence of abuse on images of God. However, some areas of research have touched on issues related to abuse. For example, there has been research conducted on the influence of parental images in a person's image of God. Family functioning has been found to influence a person's image of God. There has also been research looking at self-esteem and God image. The research in these areas will be reviewed and related to abuse in the following sections.

Image of God

One of the first studies looking at the image of God in college students was done by Spilka, Armatas, and Nussbaum (1964). In an effort to find a unitary nature of the image of God, Spilka et al. developed a 64 item adjective list that described God. The items were obtained by asking 205 students to describe what

God meant to them. The items produced from the subjects were analyzed and items that were common and easily read and understood were kept.

Spilka et al. (1964) gave the 64 items to two groups. One group consisted of 200 sophomore females at a Catholic women's college that was considered to be very religious. The second group was 364 undergraduate students at the University of Denver who had some religious affiliation. The items were administered in a Q-sort format and a principal components factor analysis was done on God images for each group of subjects. These analyses produced 11 factors for the Catholic sample and 12 factors for the general students.

Spilka et al. (1964) concluded that differences in God images existed between the two groups, although the first three factors in each of the groups were very similar. Both groups identified what God was not - wrathful, avenging, and damning God. God was seen by both groups as an omni-God, omnipresent, absolute, and infinite. Both groups also identified what God was to them; they saw God as a parental figure, although the general group used more positive descriptors, such as considerate, comforting, and helpful. The remaining factors were fairly unique to each of the groups. However, the two groups had seventy percent agreement on the items that were the most and least descriptive of God. Therefore, the implication of these findings is that there are differences in people's images of God.

Gorsuch (1968) expanded on Spilka et al.'s (1964) research by increasing the possible God descriptors. He used 63 adjectives from Spilka et al.'s study and added 28 more adjectives that addressed evaluation (eg. good versus bad, safe versus dangerous), potency (strong versus weak), and activity (active versus

passive). Gorsuch had 585 undergraduate Vanderbilt students rate the adjectives on a three point scale.

Gorsuch (1968) found three factors that firmly matched factors from Spilka et al.'s (1964) research and two factors that tentatively matched. The three firm factors were omni-ness, deistieness, and wrathfulness. Omni-ness referred to human characteristics taken to infinite power (infinite, omnipotent, and omnipresent). Deistieness described God as being transcendent with little relationship with humans. Items describing deistieness were distant, impersonal, inaccessible, mythical, and passive. Wrathfulness implied a God that is in judgment over humans, being avenging, damning, punishing, stern, blunt, and severe. The two less established factors were benevolent deity and eternity. The benevolent deity factor described the relationship between a transient God and humans. God was seen as all-wise, comforting, divine, forgiving, loving, and protective. Eternity stressed that God was seen as eternal, divine, everlasting, and holy.

These studies by Spilka et al. (1964) and Gorsuch (1968) are the two general studies upon which most of the future research is based. Both studies used very general samples which displayed the large amount of variability in images of God. The adjective lists used in these studies were frequently employed in later studies using more specific research questions.

Parental Images and Image of God

The paternal image has been found to correlate with the image of God. Vergote and Aubert (1972) had Catholic students assign maternal and paternal

qualities to their image of mother, father and God. They found the image of God integrated more paternal qualities than maternal qualities. However, the paternal qualities given to God were not exactly the same as those assigned to the father image. The God image was defined with items about law and authority, while the father image was seen as law, order, authority, dynamism, realism, and systematic attitude. Also, maternal qualities were represented in the image of God and these increased with subject age. This study suggests that students use both maternal and paternal qualities in their image of God, however paternal qualities that are not similar to their father image are more representative of their God image.

Justice and Lambert (1986) showed that the personality of the natural father was positively correlated with the image of God. People admitted to a hospital and people in a Sunday school class were asked to report their childhood perceptions of the personality characteristics of their parents and their current perceptions of God. The results showed a positive correlation between the subjects' image of their father and their image of God. The maternal personality correlation with the God image was not significant, but was close ($p = .06$). The reason for hospital admission and the age of subjects was not given, which limits the interpretation of the findings.

When rating parents as the subjects felt their parents should be not as the parents really were, high school and college age subjects rated the image of God as having more paternal qualities (Vergote et al., 1969). The qualities assigned to the God image were not the same as those given to the father image. The God image contained paternal qualities such as strength, power, the one who has knowledge, the rule, the judge, and the one who gives the law. The father image items were the

one who takes the initiative, the one who has knowledge, decision maker, and protection against danger. Although paternal qualities dominated the God image, maternal characteristics were also incorporated into the God image. Some of the maternal qualities in the God image were patience, sympathy with the child's sorrows, self-giving love, and comfort.

These studies give some support to the idea that the image of God is a father image. It was seen in these studies that paternal characteristics made up the majority of the God image. However, in all the studies, maternal characteristics contributed to the God image.

On the other hand, some studies have found the maternal image to be closer to the God image, instead of the father image. One study that supported the maternal God image was done by Tamayo and Dugas (1977). The authors had French Canadian liberal arts, science, and graduate college students identify items related to their images of their parents and God. The results showed that the students' ratings of their mothers and God were more similar than the father and God images. However, previous research using the same instrument (Vergote et al., 1969) demonstrated that American subjects' God image resembled the father image. Therefore, culture may have been an influence in the God image in these two studies.

Researchers have looked at the image of God as a reflection of the preferred parent, instead of being influenced by only the maternal or paternal image. Nelson (1971) found college, high school, and adult subjects related the image of God to the preferred parent. Males showed a stronger correlation between God and the preferred parent. When the preferred parent was the father, females had a higher

correlation between God and the father image, but the correlation between God and mother images was also significant. Therefore, the preferred parent image appears to be reflected in the God image for males but is not consistently in the female's God image.

Spilka, Addison, and Rosensohn (1975) found support for the preferred pattern of the God image in females. When the preferred parent was the mother, the results from high school females showed a significant correlation between the image of a loving mother and the image of a loving God.

Two studies have found the total parental image to correlate with the image of God. Tamayo and Dugas (1977) found that college science majors used equally maternal and paternal qualities to describe God. However, the overall findings of the study supported the maternal qualities correlation with God image. The results suggested that people assigned parental qualities to God differently. Specifically, a person's college major was related to his or her image of God.

The second study was conducted by Birky and Ball (1985). The study asked college students to rate mother, father, composite parents, and God images on a 36-item adjective rating form. The results showed that the composite parent image best represented the image of God.

The findings of these parental image studies suggest that the image of God represents both images of the parents. Paternal, maternal, and composite parental images were found to be contained in the God image. Exactly how the parental images combine to make up the God image remains unknown. However, it can be concluded that parental images are contained in the image of God.

Parental images and Abuse

A child forms images of his or her parents based on the interactions with his or her parents. If the interactions are based on neglect, rejection, physical harm, or sexual activity the images of the parents would reflect this. Based on past research it is expected that these parental images would then be reflected in the image of God.

Cole and Woolger (1989) questioned female child sexual abuse survivors about their perceptions of their parents. They found that victims of father or stepfather incest saw their fathers as less accepting and as stricter disciplinarians than did women abused by a nonfamily member. Mothers were perceived by incest victims as less involved than mothers of nonincest victims. Both parents were perceived as more negatively controlling than the parents of nonincest victims. The authors concluded that incest victims have more negative perceptions of their parents than nonincest victims, and incest parents lack positive involvement with the victim.

Herzberger, Potts, and Dillon (1981) looked at parental perceptions of eight to fourteen year old males with behavioral or emotional disturbances. Subjects were divided into groups of physically abused or not physically abused. The results showed that the physically abused males perceived their parents negatively. The abused subjects also saw their parents as treating them more negatively. Abusive mothers were perceived as more emotionally neglecting than non-abusing mothers. This pattern was seen in the perceptions of fathers but was not statistically significant. Subjects also reported feeling afraid of the parent that abused them. The subjects described punishment as the source of their fear. The

subjects attributed their fathers' punishments to their fathers' mean characters, while abusive mothers were seen as not feeling bad about hitting their sons. The main limitation of this study was the absence of a control group without any behavioral or emotional problems. Therefore, it is difficult to generalize these results to persons with no behavioral or emotional disturbances.

Halperin (1983) also studied abused children's perceptions of their parents. Halperin used abusive families and nonabusive families in her study. She asked abused children and siblings of abused children about their perceptions of their parents and their siblings. She found that the abused child and his or her sibling did not differ in their perceptions of the parents. The abused child did differ significantly from families where no abuse occurred. Abused children more frequently described both their mothers and fathers using a greater proportion of negative versus positive descriptions as compared to the control children. The siblings of the abused child used fewer positive descriptions of their parents than did the control group. The author concluded that abused children perceived their parents more negatively and less positively than the control group. The siblings of the abused children did not see their parents more negatively than controls, but did not view their parents less positively.

Dean, Malik, Richards, and Stringer (1986) asked maltreated and nonmaltreated children to tell stories about child and mother interactions in which the child or mother engaged in a kind or unkind act. The researchers noted how the child or mother responded to the act, and whether the act was reciprocated or not. The results showed that maltreated children told more stories about children reciprocation a mother's kind act, and fewer stories of the mother reciprocation a

child's kind act than did nonmaltreated children. When telling stories about unkind acts, the maltreated and nonmaltreated groups did not differ; both groups saw unkind acts by the child to be reciprocated by the adult. Maltreated children blamed unkind acts by the mother toward the child on bad behavior of the child. The authors concluded that maltreated children saw parents as superior to children. The parents were justified in treating children unkindly because children deserved to be punished. The parent could not be criticized and the children were always to blame.

These studies on parental images suggest that persons who have been abused will hold negative perceptions of their parents. These parental images are less accepting, disciplinarian, less involved, negatively controlling, and are described in negative terms. Based on research dealing with the development of the God image and parental images, it would be hypothesized that the abused person reflects these negative parental images in his/her image of God.

Family Functioning and God Image

The image of God not only is related to parental images, but also to parental and family behavior. Potvin (1977) compared adolescents' perceptions of parental affection and control to their images of God. Parental control consistently discriminated between subjects who believed in a loving and punishing God and those who believed in a loving but nonpunishing God. Subjects that scored low on perceived parental control did not believe in a punishing God and those that saw God as punishing scored high on parental control. Parental affection was a significant discriminator for females 13 to 15 years old and males 16 to 18 years old. In both cases subjects that scored low on parental affection saw God as

impersonal. The 13 to 15 year old females that scored high on parental affection saw God as personal, loving, and either punishing or nonpunishing. Males 16 to 18 scoring high on parental affection saw God as personal, loving, and punishing. Parental affection appears to facilitate the development of a personal God image, while parental control facilitates an image of a punishing God.

Edwards, Hill-Harris, Fletcher-Brokaw, and Jacobson (1992) compared family interaction and descriptions of God. The researchers asked undergraduate students to complete measures of family interaction and God image. The results showed that family interaction was related to images of God as wrathful, benevolent, loving, and controlling. Subjects that perceived God as wrathful, standing in judgment of them, damning, punishing, nonloving, noncomforting, nondivine and nonprotective described their family members as having little concern for each other. Fathers were neglectful, and both parents were seen as arguing back and forth with no resolution to the argument and having little support for each other. One parent was seen as pulling a child into arguments, forcing him or her to choose sides. Conflicts between the child and father were seen as not getting resolved.

These studies on parental behavior add to the complexity of the God image. The family history of a person seems to play an important role in the development of the image of God. This premise has significant implications for a person that comes from an abusive home.

Research on abusive families has not shown any consistent patterns of family functioning. Justice and Justice (1976) suggested that the abusive family is characterized by fusion. Fusion was defined as families that are stuck together,

with members having trouble differentiating themselves from others. Justice and Justice theorized that marital conflicts spill over into violent behavior that is directed at the child. Competition occurs within the abusive family over who will be taken care of by other family members.

Caplan, Watters, White, Parry, and Bates (1984) conducted research looking at characteristics of abusive families. Data was collected from clinical records of 422 children who had been physically abused, physically neglected, emotionally abused, or sexually abused. The data showed that spousal conflict was common in the sample. The parental marriage was described as unstable and unsatisfactory. A high percentage of cases revealed family discord. The exact definitions of marital and family functioning were not provided in the research.

Harter, Alexander, and Neimeyer (1988) examined the characteristics of incestuous families. Female college students answered a variety of questions about their family functioning. Incest victims described their families as less cohesive. The families were seen as having poor emotional bonding between members. Subjects also reported that their families lacked the ability to adapt relationship rules, power structure, and role relationships.

Another study looking at family functioning of incestuous families was done by Parker and Parker (1986). Subjects used in this study were males who had abused their minor daughters and males who had no history of such abuse. The results showed that abusive fathers spent less time at home than the nonabusive fathers. The abusive father spent significantly less time in nurturant tasks, such as showing affection, playing, and feeding the child, than nonabusive fathers. The authors emphasized that these characteristics do not predict the occurrence of sexual

abuse but are related to it. The event of incest appeared to be complex and many more factors may have contributed to the occurrence of incest.

Interactions between abused infants and their mothers were used by Egeland, Sroufe, and Erickson (1983) to evaluate family functioning. Mothers that had been physically abusive, hostile/verbally abusive, psychologically unavailable, and neglectful were selected as the experimental group. The mothers were asked to teach their infants at 9, 12, 18, and 24 months a task. Judges rated the interactions in terms of the child's anger at the mother, compliance with the mother's suggestions, reliance on the mother for help, affection for the mother, and avoidance of the mother. All the abused infants were more noncompliant, negative, and expressed little affection for their mothers as compared to nonabused infants. The abused infants were more reliant on their mothers, but also more avoidant of their mothers than the nonabused infants. The physically abused infants were the least compliant, while the verbally abused infants were the most avoidant of their mothers.

Characteristics of physically and sexually abusive and neglectful families were studied by Williamson, Borduin, and Howe (1991). Adolescents from abusive and nonabusive families and their mothers were given self-report measures and behavior rating inventories. Family functioning was evaluated through measures of adaptability and cohesion. Nonmaltreated adolescents reported higher family cohesion than any of the adolescents in the abusive groups. Sexually and physically abused adolescents reported lower levels of family adaptability than the nonmaltreated adolescents. The mothers' perceptions of cohesion and adaptability in the family did not differ significantly.

These studies suggest some basic ideas about abusive family functioning. The abusive home appears to lack cohesiveness, which can be seen in the poor emotional bonding between the members. Abusive families also appear to have difficulty in adapting relationship rules and roles. The father in incestuous families is distant, while the mother in abusive homes is avoided. Little affection seems to be present in abusive families. These functioning patterns may be reflected in the abused person's image of God since family history is related to the God image.

Self-image and Image of God

Another image that appears to be related to the image of God is the self-image. Benson and Spilka (1973) studied self-image and God image in male Catholic high school students. Subjects with high self-esteem rated God positively. These subjects saw God as loving, personal, merciful, forgiving, and patient. Self-esteem was negatively correlated to an image of God as vindictive, wrathful, avenging, controlling, inaccessible, punishing, and restricting. The authors concluded that high self-esteem was positively related to an image of a loving God and negatively related to an image of a rejecting, impersonal, and controlling God. These results were only found in males and should be generalized to females cautiously.

Spilka, Addison, and Rosensohn (1975) used both male and female high school subjects to examine God images and self-esteem. The results showed that subjects who reported having high self-esteem held images of a positive, close, personal, involved, and loving god. Males with low self-esteem viewed God as wrathful and females with low self-esteem saw God as deistic.

Potvin (1977) related adolescent God images to self-esteem. The results showed self-esteem was significantly different between subjects that believed in a loving and non-punishing God and those that doubted or did not believe in a personal God. Self-esteem was higher in subjects that saw God as loving and non-punishing. Unfortunately, this article did not provide further details about their findings.

These studies suggest that self-esteem is related to one's image of God. People with lower self-esteem are more likely to see God negatively. The negative perceptions of God are non-loving, impersonal, wrathful, and unforgiving. It is possible that victims of abuse may view God in negative ways because they tend to have lower self-esteem.

The research on abuse victims' levels of self-esteem has shown that many of the victims have low levels of self-esteem. Self-esteem in female undergraduate students was studied by Briere and Runtz (1990). The experimenters rated subjects based on their reports of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. The results showed that subjects reporting any abuse had low self-esteem and that psychological abuse was especially predictive of low self-esteem. The authors concluded that a subject's abuse history was significantly related to her current self-esteem.

German, Habenicht, and Futch (1990) questioned adolescent incest victims who were in therapy about their self-esteem. The subjects' scores on the measures were compared to non-clinical norms that each measure provided. The subjects in the study scored significantly lower on their overall self-concept and reported feeling unhappy and unsatisfied. The authors concluded that incest victims

had low self-concepts as compared to the normal population. However, it is unclear from this study whether incest victims not seeking therapy have lower self-concepts than the normal population.

Pantle and Oegema (1990) used adolescents admitted to a crisis unit as subjects for their study. Sexually abused adolescents and nonabused adolescents from the unit were asked about their self-esteem. The abused adolescents did not score differently than the nonabused subjects on the measure of self-esteem. However, abuse duration significantly differentiated between high and low self-esteem. Victims who had been abused for less than one year had higher self-esteem than abuse victims whose abuse lasted over a year. It cannot be concluded from this study that sexually abused adolescents do not have lower self-esteem than the normal population because the control sample used was admitted into a crisis center which suggests the controls were having problems themselves.

Oates, Forrest, and Peacock (1985) asked abused and nonabused males and females ranging in age from four to fourteen to complete a questionnaire on their self-concept. The abused children scored significantly lower on self-concept than the nonabused children. The definition of abuse for this study was not provided but seemed to imply the abuse was physical in nature.

Kazdin, Moser, Colbus, and Bell (1985) also studied abused children admitted to a psychiatric facility. Subjects were divided into two groups, one consisting of children who had been physically abused, and the other group consisting of nonabused children. The children who had been physically abused scored lower on a measure of self-esteem than nonabused children.

The studies presented on self-esteem in victims of abuse support the idea that abuse victims have lower self-esteem than people without a history of abuse. Physically, sexually, and emotionally abused people have been found to have lower self-esteem

Research on the development of the image of God suggests this development occurs during a person's childhood. The perceptions people hold of their parents, family and self are reflected in the image God. For the abused child, childhood contains moments of physical, emotional, and/or sexual maltreatment. These factors are reflected in their negative perceptions of their parents, family, and themselves. Therefore, it is hypothesized that victims of abuse will hold a negative image of God.

This hypothesis was investigated by Justice (1984). The author asked people admitted to a hospital and people in a Sunday school class to rate their image of God. Subjects who reported being sexually handled or feeling sexually desired by a parent were compared to subjects with no such reports. The results showed that abused subjects held a significantly more negative image of God than did nonabused subjects. However, this study had some limitations. One limitation was that the analysis was done post hoc without any control for the post hoc statistics. Also, the analyses were based on a sample size of only twenty-three subjects. A further limitation was that only sexual abuse was considered. Therefore, it remains unknown whether the negative God image was due to sexual abuse or to abuse in general. The last limitation was that the research was conducted using a questionnaire that the experimenter created himself. This unique

questionnaire limits the ability to compare this study to other research that has been conducted.

The research reviewed above offers some conclusions. Parental images, family functioning, and self-esteem are related to the image of God. Specifically, when these factors are negative the image of God will also be negative. The abuse victim reports having negative parental images, family functioning, and self-esteem. Therefore, it may be possible that the abuse victim will have a negative image of God. However, only one study has specifically examined abuse victims' God image. The one study looked only at sexual abuse and was limited in its conclusion. It is clear that further research needs to be done evaluating the abused person's image of God.

This research looked at abused and nonabused college students' images of God. It was predicted that abused participants would have a more negative image of God than nonabused participants.

Self-esteem, family functioning, and parental images were also dependent measures. Abused and nonabused participants were compared on each of the measures to identify any differences. A regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship of each of these dependent measures to the image of God to see if any of the variables were predictive of God images.

Abused participants were divided into groups of sexually abused, physically abused, psychologically abused, and multiabused. This allowed analyses of the God and parental images held by persons from a variety of abuse situations and nonabused persons. The groups were compared on a variety of possible God and parental images to identify any differences that may have existed.

Hypotheses

1. Participants scoring as abused would view God more negatively than non-abused participants. Specifically, abused participants would see God as more wrathful, false, worthless, deistic, and condemning than non-abused participants.
2. Participants scoring as abused would view their parents more negatively than non-abused participants. Specifically, abused participants would view their parents as wrathful, false, worthless, deistic, and condemning. Also, abused participants would view their families as less adaptive and less cohesive than non-abused participants.
3. Participants scoring as abused would have lower self-esteem than non-abused participants.

Differences between abused and non-abused participants images of God, mother, and father on all factors were explored. Differences in the God and parental images held by sexually abused, physically abused, psychologically abused, and multi-abused were explored. A hierarchical regression analysis was done to see if any of the abuse, parental, family, or self-esteem scores predicted images of God.

CHAPTER II

Methods

Participants. Participants were 147 male and female Drake University students and 38 Des Moines Area Community College students enrolled in psychology courses. Participants ranged in age of 17 to 50. The racial make-up of the sample consisted of 168 Caucasians, eight African Americans, three Hispanics, five Asians, and one person who was a race other than the races listed. Participants that volunteered for the study were given extra credit for their participation in the study.

Materials. Participants were given a packet containing six questionnaires. The questionnaires were randomly placed within the packets to eliminate any arrangement bias. The questionnaires were:

1. Demographic information (Appendix A). This questionnaire contained seventeen questions dealing with general information, parental information, and religious history.

2. Family Experiences Questionnaire (FEQ) (Appendix B). The FEQ is a twelve item questionnaire designed by Briere and Runtz to measure psychological and physical abuse by a person's mother and/or father (Briere & Runtz, 1988). The psychological and physical abuse scales were developed using a rational/intuitive approach. Items on the psychological abuse scale deal with verbal parental behaviors, while the physical abuse scale is concerned with nonverbal parental behaviors. The questionnaire divides the two scales into two additional scales creating four scales, psychological abuse by mother (PSYm), psychological

abused by father (PSYf), physical abuse by mother (PHYm), and physical abuse by father (PHYf). Reliability coefficients on the four scales are .87 for PSYm, .87 for PSYf, .78 for PHYm, and .75 for PHYf (Briere & Runtz, 1988). Physical and psychological abused scales were added for stepfather and stepmother in this study. Abused participants, in this study, were those that scored in the top fifty percent on the physical and/or psychological abuse scales. Non-abused participants were those that scored in the bottom fifty percent on the scales.

In addition to the FEQ, six items from the Child Abuse and Trauma Scale (Sanders & Giolas, 1991) were used. The items taken from this scale were those that make up a sexual abuse scale. The validity of this scale was shown to be adequate by Sanders and Giolas (1991). Patient records were used to assess the extent of abuse or trauma their subjects had experienced. Ratings of sexual abuse based on these records were significantly correlated with the sexual abuse scores on the Child Abuse and Trauma scale (CATS). Reliability for the entire CATS was assessed using the Guttman split-half procedure and the reliability coefficient was .86. In this study, participants reporting any sexual abuse were classified as abused.

3. God Concept Questionnaire (Appendix C). This questionnaire was based on Gorsuch's (1968) list of 75 adjectives that describe God. Schaefer and Gorsuch (1992) identified eleven primary concept of God contained in Gorsuch's questionnaire (wrathful, deistic, omni, traditional/benevolent, guiding, false, stable, worthless, powerful, condemning, and caring). Adjectives for this study were the 47 that significantly loaded on these factors (see Appendix D for adjectives in each factor). Participants were asked to rate each adjective on a five point scale, whether

they strongly disagree, tend to disagree, not sure, tend to agree, strongly agree, based on their personal view of God. Scoring of the questionnaire was done by finding the mean of the adjective ratings for each factor.

4. Parental Concept Questionnaires (Appendix E). Parental concepts were measured using the same adjectives and factors that are contained in the God Concept Questionnaire. Participants were asked to rate their perceptions of their mothers and fathers. Separate questionnaires were given for each parent. Scoring was done in the same manner as the God Concept Questionnaire.

5. Rosenberg Self-esteem scale (Appendix F). The Rosenberg Self-esteem scale (RSES) contains ten questions that measure attitudes toward the self (Rosenberg, 1989). A high score means the person feels that he/she is a person of worth. A low score, on the other hand, represents self-dissatisfaction (Rosenberg, 1989). The RSES has been shown to have high reliability. Rosenberg (1989) found the reproductivity of the scale to be 92 percent and the scalability to be 72 percent. Validity of the RSES has been demonstrated using construct validity. Rosenberg (1989) compared scores on the RSES with self-ratings of depression and the appearance of depression to others. Persons scoring low on the RSES rated themselves as depressed and were rated by others as being depressed. These findings support the validity of the scale.

6. Family Inventories: Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES II) (Appendix G). This thirty item scale assesses perceived family functioning (Olson, Bell, & Portner 1982). The test is divided into three scales, adaptability, cohesion, and family type or total score. The test has been shown to have good reliability. The internal consistency for cohesion was .87, adaptability

.78, and total score was .90. Test-retest reliability was assessed, after a four to five week lapse, and was .84 for the total score, .83 for cohesion, and .80 for adaptability. These reliability coefficients are based on 50 items that were originally included in the FACES, the authors condensed the test to thirty items based on factor analysis and reliability analysis. The concurrent validity of the FACES II appears to be adequate. Hampson, Hulgus, and Beavers (1991) found a correlation between the Dallas Self-Report Family Inventory and the FACES II cohesion scale to be .93 and the adaptability scale to be .79.

Procedure. The study was conducted in large groups in classrooms at Drake University and Des Moines Area Community College. An informed consent was given and read to the participants prior to the start of the study. After the informed consent was signed, the experimenter collected the consent forms.

All the participants who signed the informed consent were given a packet of questionnaires. It was stressed to the participants that they were not to write their names or any other identifying information on any of the materials. Participants were told to follow the directions in the packet. No time limit was placed on the participants in completing the questionnaires. The experimenter was available to answer any the participants may have had during the study session.

Upon completing the packet, participants were given a debriefing sheet. This sheet explained the study and offered the participants the results of the study. Information on counseling services was also provided due to questions within the study dealing with personal abuse.

CHAPTER III

Results

Participants were divided into two groups based on their reports of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. An abused group was formed containing participants who scored in the top half of a median split on the physical and psychological abuse scales and/or those that identified any form of sexual abuse ($n = 134$). The abused group subsequently was broken into groups based on type of abuse, those groups being physically abused ($n = 26$), sexually abused ($n = 11$), psychologically abused ($n = 23$), and multiabused ($n = 74$). The nonabused group consisted of participants scoring below the median on the psychological and physical abuse scales and reporting no sexual abuse ($n = 51$).

Preliminary analyses

Preliminary chi-squares and t-tests were conducted to determine if differences existed between the abused and nonabused groups on basic demographic variables. The results indicated no differences existed between the groups in age ($t(182) = .28, p > .77$), sex ($\chi^2(1) = .44, p > .51$), and race ($\chi^2(4) = 4.35, p > .36$). The analyses also indicated no differences between the groups regarding whether their parents were divorced ($\chi^2(1) = 2.90, p > .08$), participant's age when their parents got divorced ($t(39) = .57, p > .57$), which parent the participant lived with if their parents were divorced ($\chi^2(3) = 1.96, p > .58$), how often they would visit their non-custodial parent ($t(25) = -1.08, p > .29$), whether their divorced father remarried ($\chi^2(1) = 1.74, p > .19$), and whether their divorced mother remarried ($\chi^2(1) = .79, p > .37$). Reported degree of closeness with one's parents and stepparents was compared between the groups.

No differences were found in how close participants reported they were to their stepfather ($t(25) = .54, p > .59$), to their stepmother ($t(27) = 1.35, p > .19$), and to their mother ($t(180) = 1.72, p > .08$). However, the t-tests did indicate the groups were significantly different in their closeness with their fathers ($t(179) = 2.13, p < .05$). Specifically, it appeared that abused participants did not feel as close to their fathers as the nonabused group (means = 3.75, 4.19 respectively). Because image of God may be affected by variables related to participation in organized religion, several religious variables were examined. No differences between the groups were demonstrated on their religious affiliation ($\chi^2(5) = 4.97, p > .42$), how religious they currently are ($t(183) = 0.45, p > .66$), how often they currently attend religious activities ($t(183) = -0.88, p > .38$), and how religious they were while growing up ($t(183) = -0.79, p > .43$).

Main analyses

A 2x2 multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to assess whether participants in the abused group viewed God more negatively than those in the nonabused group. The dependent variables were the negative God image factors of wrathful, false, worthless, deistic, and condemning. The sex of the participant was included as an independent variable to evaluate any sex differences that may have existed (see Table 1 for means and standard deviations). The MANOVA indicated there was no main effect of abuse grouping ($F(5,157) = 1.17, p > .32$). Sex of the participant was also found to be nonsignificant ($F(5,157) = 1.50, p > .19$). Finally, no interaction was found between abuse grouping and sex of participant ($F(1,157) = 0.57, p > .72$).

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Negative God Image Factors by Abuse and Sex

God image factor	Males		Females	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<u>Wrathful</u>				
Nonabused	3.06	0.97	2.64	0.89
Abused	3.13	0.91	2.73	0.93
<u>False</u>				
Nonabused	1.56	0.82	1.53	0.94
Abused	1.59	0.86	1.37	0.66
<u>Deistic</u>				
Nonabused	2.25	0.79	2.18	0.55
Abused	2.57	0.78	2.13	0.88
<u>Worthless</u>				
Nonabused	1.49	0.53	1.40	0.61
Abused	1.66	0.82	1.44	0.70
<u>Condemning</u>				
Nonabused	2.29	0.93	2.20	0.94
Abused	2.63	0.85	2.18	0.77

A 5x2 MANOVA was conducted to test if type of abuse (none, physical, psychological, sexual, and multiabuse) had any effect on the five negative God images (see Table 2). The results of this MANOVA were insignificant for the main effect of type of abuse ($F(20,616) = 1.06, p > .38$). Sex of the participant did not have a significant effect ($F(5,151) = 2.25, p > .052$). The interaction between type of abuse and sex of participant also had an insignificant effect ($F(20,616) = 0.74, p > .79$). The results of these analyses indicate hypothesis one was not supported. Thus, participants did not view God more negatively than nonabused participants.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Negative God Image Factors by Type of Abuse and Sex

God image factor	Males			Females		
	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n
<u>Wrathful</u>						
Nonabused	3.06	0.97	15	2.64	0.89	32
Sexually	3.58	0.35	2	2.71	1.13	7
Physically	2.71	0.96	7	2.69	0.84	18
Psychologically	2.93	0.93	10	3.00	0.94	11
Multiabused	3.32	0.91	22	2.68	0.95	41
<u>False</u>						
Nonabused	1.56	0.82		1.53	0.94	
Sexually	1.83	1.18		1.33	0.51	
Physically	1.29	0.53		1.33	0.51	
Psychologically	1.60	0.63		1.33	0.47	
Multiabused	1.65	1.03		1.41	0.79	
<u>Deistic</u>						
Nonabused	2.25	0.79		2.18	0.55	
Sexually	3.50	0.14		2.20	1.01	
Physically	2.11	0.69		1.86	0.73	
Psychologically	2.69	0.85		2.24	0.82	
Multiabused	2.61	0.72		2.21	0.94	
<u>Worthless</u>						
Nonabused	1.49	0.53		1.40	0.61	
Sexually	1.67	0.94		1.48	0.60	
Physically	1.33	0.58		1.44	0.65	
Psychologically	1.67	0.67		1.21	0.34	
Multiabused	1.76	0.96		1.49	0.81	
<u>Condemning</u>						
Nonabused	2.29	0.93		2.20	0.94	
Sexually	3.30	0.14		1.94	0.55	
Physically	2.46	0.85		2.23	0.76	
Psychologically	2.20	0.34		2.20	0.64	
Multiabused	2.82	0.98		2.20	0.86	

Negative images of parents and family were examined to assess whether the abused and nonabused groups differed on their scores. The mother and father factors of wrathful, false, worthless, deistic, and condemning, along with participants' scores on the FACES II were used as dependent variables. Classification as abused and nonabused and sex of the participant were independent variables in a 2x2 MANOVA (see Table 3 for means and standard deviations). The analysis showed a main effect of abuse ($F(11,161) = 4.11, p < .000$). Follow-up analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to test for differences between the groups on each of the dependent variables, using Bonferroni's correction of significance (see Table 4). The two groups differed on five of the dependent variables: mother image factors of false, worthless, and condemning, the father image factor condemning, and the FACES II score. An examination of the means showed abused participants viewed their mothers as more false, worthless, and condemning, their fathers as more condemning, and their families as having less cohesion and adaptability than nonabused participants. Thus, there was support for hypothesis two, that abused participants view their parents and family more negatively than nonabused participants.

A 5x2 MANOVA was done on the negative father image factors by type of abuse and sex (see Table 5). There was a significant main effect of type of abuse ($F(20,664) = 1.73, p < .03$). The interaction between sex of the participant and type of abuse was insignificant ($F(20,664) = 0.91, p > .58$). Follow-up ANOVAs, using Bonferroni's correction (see Table 5), on the five dependent variables by type of abuse showed that the groups differed on the factors of false, deistic, worthless,

Table 3

Means and Standard deviations for Negative Image Factors of Parents and Family
by Abuse and Sex

Parent factor	Mother				Father			
	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<u>Wrathful</u>								
Nonabused	2.68	0.74	2.36	0.73	2.95	0.82	2.67	0.76
Abused	2.94	0.78	2.91	0.85	3.38	0.65	2.96	0.74
<u>False</u>								
Nonabused	1.15	0.32	1.33	0.35	1.41	0.75	1.50	0.71
Abused	1.70	0.81	1.67	0.85	1.95	1.06	1.93	1.04
<u>Deistic</u>								
Nonabused	1.91	0.59	1.87	0.54	2.09	0.77	1.94	0.62
Abused	2.22	0.69	2.00	0.75	2.48	0.70	2.23	0.74
<u>Worthless</u>								
Nonabused	1.15	0.22	1.32	0.40	1.46	0.69	1.55	0.71
Abused	1.71	0.70	1.75	0.76	2.06	0.90	1.81	0.94
<u>Condemning</u>								
Nonabused	1.85	0.63	1.77	0.68	2.20	0.73	1.91	0.50
Abused	2.45	0.83	2.35	0.82	2.90	0.92	2.45	0.87
<u>FACES II</u>								
	Males		Females					
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
Nonabused	57.08	6.30	54.41	7.90				
Abused	47.63	8.97	49.61	10.73				

Table 4

Analysis of Variance of Negative Parent and Family Factors

Mother factors	<i>F</i> (1,171)	<i>p</i>	Father factors	<i>F</i> (1,171)	<i>p</i>
Wrathful	7.30	0.088	Wrathful	7.11	0.088
False	10.10	0.022*	False	7.16	0.088
Deistic	2.96	0.957	Deistic	6.48	0.132
Worthless	15.71	0.004*	Worthless	6.85	0.110
Condemning	16.39	0.004*	Condemning	16.40	0.004*
FACES II	15.00	0.004*			

*Significant at .05 level

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations for the Negative Father Image Factors by Type of Abuse and Sex and the ANOVAs for the Type of Abuse Effect

Father image factors	Males			Females			ANOVAs	
	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	<i>F</i> (4,167)	<i>p</i>
<u>Wrathful</u>								
Nonabused	2.95	0.82	13	2.67	0.76	33	2.45	0.240
Sexually	3.50	0.17	3	2.96	0.56	8		
Physically	2.94	0.31	8	3.00	0.79	17		
Psychologically	3.08	0.93	11	2.88	0.70	12		
Multiabused	3.53	0.70	27	2.97	0.76	45		
<u>False</u>								
Nonabused	1.41	0.75		1.50	0.71		4.78	0.005*
Sexually	1.78	0.51		1.46	0.35			
Physically	1.38	0.38		1.51	0.93			
Psychologically	1.70	0.81		2.06	0.85			
Multiabused	2.22	1.24		2.13	1.14			
<u>Deistic</u>								
Nonabused	2.09	0.77		1.94	0.62		3.83	0.025*
Sexually	2.53	0.83		1.80	0.52			
Physically	2.03	0.48		2.01	0.50			
Psychologically	2.49	0.70		2.08	0.51			
Multiabused	2.56	0.73		2.43	0.83			
<u>Worthless</u>								
Nonabused	1.46	0.69		1.55	0.71		3.97	0.020*
Sexually	1.78	0.51		1.67	0.44			
Physically	1.46	0.43		1.51	0.69			
Psychologically	2.00	1.03		1.69	0.72			
Multiabused	2.25	0.93		1.97	1.11			
<u>Condemning</u>								
Nonabused	2.20	0.73		1.91	0.50		6.23	.002*
Sexually	2.53	0.42		2.25	0.45			
Physically	2.08	0.48		2.39	0.85			
Psychologically	2.95	1.12		2.32	0.63			
Multiabused	3.10	0.90		2.54	0.98			

*Significant at the .05 level

and condemning. Scheffe's procedure was used to examine the groups to find where differences on each of the significant factors occurred. Multiabused participants saw their fathers more negatively on all four of the factors than the nonabused participants. Also, multiabused participants saw their fathers as more false than physically abused participants. The main effect for sex was insignificant ($F(5,163) = 1.85, p > .12$).

A 5x2 MANOVA was also conducted examining the negative mother image factors by type of abuse and sex of the participant (see Table 6). The sex of participant did not significantly affect negative mother images ($F(5,169) = 1.09, p > .37$). The interaction between sex of the participant and type of abuse was insignificant as well ($F(20,688) = 0.96, p > .52$). Type of abuse did have a significant effect on negative mother images ($F(20,688) = 2.66, p < .000$). Follow-up ANOVAs, using Bonferroni's correction (see Table 6), identified significant differences among the groups on the wrathful, false, deistic, worthless, and condemning factors. Comparisons between the groups were made using Scheffe's procedure on each of the negative mother image factors. The results of the analyses identified significant differences between the multiabused group and the nonabused, physically abused, and sexually abused groups. Specifically, the multiabused group saw their mothers as being more wrathful, false, deistic, worthless, and condemning than the nonabused group. The multiabused also viewed their mothers as more false, deistic, worthless, and condemning than the physically abused group. Lastly, the multiabused group saw their mothers as more deistic and condemning than the sexually abused group.

Table 6

Means and Standard deviations for the Negative Mother Image Factors by Type of Abuse and Sex and the ANOVAs for the Type of Abuse Effect

Mother image factors

	Males			Female			ANOVAs	
	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	<i>F</i> (4,173)	<i>p</i>
<u>Wrathful</u>								
Nonabused	2.74	0.68	16	2.40	0.75	35	4.72	0.005*
Sexually	2.72	0.26	3	2.42	0.68	8		
Physically	2.35	0.78	8	2.79	0.76	18		
Psychologically	2.87	0.93	10	2.62	0.87	11		
Multiabused	3.16	0.68	27	3.12	0.90	47		
<u>False</u>								
Nonabused	1.25	0.43		1.32	0.35		5.93	0.002*
Sexually	1.22	0.39		1.29	0.38			
Physically	1.38	0.33		1.24	0.39			
Psychologically	1.67	0.59		1.76	0.84			
Multiabused	1.86	0.96		1.85	0.95			
<u>Deistic</u>								
Nonabused	1.98	0.56		1.86	0.53		5.46	0.002*
Sexually	2.00	0.35		1.38	0.27			
Physically	1.73	0.41		1.69	0.46			
Psychologically	2.20	0.78		1.96	0.56			
Multiabused	2.40	0.70		2.22	0.83			
<u>Worthless</u>								
Nonabused	1.33	0.47		1.33	0.40		6.63	0.002*
Sexually	1.67	0.67		1.29	0.45			
Physically	1.17	0.25		1.46	0.45			
Psychologically	1.77	0.65		1.79	0.40			
Multiabused	1.85	0.75		1.90	0.88			
<u>Condemning</u>								
Nonabused	1.88	0.58		1.78	0.67		10.41	0.002*
Sexually	1.93	0.23		1.75	0.45			
Physically	1.73	0.54		2.24	0.69			
Psychologically	2.54	0.76		1.93	0.51			
Multiabused	2.70	0.84		2.61	0.85			

*Significant at the .05 level

To test hypothesis three, that abused participants would have lower self-esteem than nonabused participants, a t-test was conducted on the participants' RSES scores (mean for nonabused = 5.06, abused = 4.73). In contrast to what was hypothesized, the results showed that the abused and nonabused groups did not differ in their scores ($t(183) = 1.62, p > .11$). To see if significant differences in self-esteem were masked by grouping all the abused participants together, a 5x2 analysis of variance (ANOVA) with type of abuse and sex as independent variables was computed. There were no main effects of type of abuse ($F(4,175) = 1.90, p > .11$) or sex of participant ($F(1,175) = 0.61, p > .44$). The interaction between type of abuse and sex of participant was also insignificant ($F(4,175) = 1.04, p > .39$). Thus, hypothesis three was not supported.

Exploratory analyses were done to assess differences between the abused and nonabused groups by sex on the positive God image, positive father image and positive mother image factors. The positive factors were benevolent, omni, guiding, stable, powerful, and caring. Separate 2x2 MANOVAs were done on each of the three images by abuse grouping and sex. The MANOVA using the six positive God image factors as dependent variables (see Table 7) indicated there was no significant main effect of abuse ($F(6,156) = 0.83, p > .55$). The main effect of sex was insignificant as well ($F(6,156) = 1.10, p > .36$) and the interaction between presence/absence of abuse and sex of participant was not significant ($F(6,156) = 0.78, p > .59$). These findings further demonstrated that abused and nonabused participants do not seem to differ in the images they hold of God.

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations for Positive God Image Factors by Abuse and Sex

<u>God image factor</u>	<u>Males</u>		<u>Females</u>	
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
<u>Benevolent</u>				
Nonabused	4.47	0.56	4.49	0.67
Abused	4.30	0.82	4.60	0.63
<u>Omni</u>				
Nonabused	3.38	0.64	3.31	0.56
Abused	3.38	0.80	3.60	0.72
<u>Guiding</u>				
Nonabused	4.32	0.79	4.32	0.83
Abused	4.14	0.87	4.55	0.61
<u>Stable</u>				
Nonabused	4.03	1.04	3.94	0.90
Abused	4.20	0.82	4.19	0.82
<u>Powerful</u>				
Nonabused	4.33	0.65	4.53	0.61
Abused	4.29	0.89	4.53	0.76
<u>Caring</u>				
Nonabused	3.91	0.72	3.82	0.77
Abused	3.82	0.76	3.87	0.65

Positive father images were used as dependent variables in a second exploratory 2x2 MANOVA looking at differences between abused and nonabused participants by sex (see Table 8). A significant main effect for abuse was found ($F(6,168) = 2.21, p < .04$). Follow-up ANOVAs were done to assess differences between the abuse groups on each of the dependent variables using Bonferroni's correction (see Table 8). The ANOVAs revealed differences between the groups on the benevolent and guiding factors. A comparison of the means showed the abused group saw their fathers as less benevolent and less guiding than the nonabused group. The main effect for sex was not significant ($F(6,168) = 0.57, p > .75$); neither was the interaction between sex and abuse grouping ($F(6,168) = 0.97, p > .45$).

Table 8

Positive Father Image Factors Means and Standard Deviations, and Follow-up
ANOVAs for Abuse Grouping

Father image factor

	Males		Females		ANOVAs	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	<i>F</i> (1,173)	<i>p</i>
<u>Benevolent</u>						
Nonabused	4.21	0.52	3.87	0.63	10.73	0.006*
Abused	3.59	0.61	3.63	0.78		
<u>Omni</u>						
Nonabused	2.73	0.99	2.75	0.42	.32	0.999
Abused	2.78	0.63	2.56	0.69		
<u>Guiding</u>						
Nonabused	4.47	0.49	4.09	0.80	12.15	0.006*
Abused	3.64	0.87	3.76	0.98		
<u>Stable</u>						
Nonabused	4.50	0.58	4.24	0.65	4.73	0.186
Abused	4.07	1.07	3.91	0.99		
<u>Powerful</u>						
Nonabused	4.31	0.48	4.06	0.77	5.80	0.102
Abused	3.80	0.85	3.79	0.96		
<u>Caring</u>						
Nonabused	3.97	0.57	3.57	0.60	6.28	0.078
Abused	3.40	0.82	3.43	0.80		

*Significant at the .05 level

A third exploratory 2x2 MANOVA was done examining the positive mother image factors (see Table 9). Abuse grouping and sex served as independent variables. The main effect of abuse grouping was significant ($F(6,174) = 2.61, p < .02$). Follow-up ANOVAs, using Bonferroni's correction, showed a significant difference on the benevolent factor (see Table 9). The means for this factor suggested that abused participants saw their mothers as less benevolent than nonabused participants. There was no significant main effect for sex ($F(6,174) = 1.27, p > .27$); neither was the sex by abuse grouping interaction significant ($F(6,174) = 1.37, p > .23$).

Finally, separate 5x2 MANOVAs were conducted on positive father, mother, and God images using sex of the participant and the five types of abuse, (nonabused, physically abused, psychologically abused, sexually abused, and multiabused) as independent variables. The six positive God image factors (see Table 10) were not significantly different across type of abuse ($F(24,612) = 1.03, p > .43$). However, there was a main effect for sex across the positive God images ($F(6,150) = 2.59, p < .02$). Follow-up ANOVAs using Bonferroni's correction were done on each of the God image factors for this main effect of sex (see Table 10). The ANOVAs did not identify any factor that the groups significantly differed on. Finally, the interaction between type of abuse and sex of participant was not significant ($F(24,612) = 1.11, p > .32$).

Table 9

Positive Mother Image Factors Means and Standard Deviations, and Follow-up
ANOVAs for Abuse Grouping

Mother image factors

	Males		Females		ANOVAs	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	<i>F</i> (1,179)	<i>p</i>
<u>Benevolent</u>						
Nonabused	4.23	0.37	4.04	0.52	11.62	0.006*
Abused	3.73	0.61	3.80	0.69		
<u>Omni</u>						
Nonabused	2.69	0.80	2.75	0.56	0.06	0.999
Abused	2.69	0.60	2.80	0.71		
<u>Guiding</u>						
Nonabused	4.41	0.43	4.32	0.51	5.99	0.09
Abused	4.04	0.57	4.12	0.78		
<u>Stable</u>						
Nonabused	3.31	0.70	2.86	0.86	0.29	0.999
Abused	2.92	0.79	3.10	0.88		
<u>Powerful</u>						
Nonabused	4.03	0.43	3.49	0.84	4.21	0.252
Abused	3.38	0.80	3.52	0.94		
<u>Caring</u>						
Nonabused	3.92	0.49	3.72	0.42	5.45	0.13
Abused	3.63	0.60	3.53	0.64		

*Significant at the .05 level

Table 10

Positive God Image Factors by Type of Abuse and Sex and Follow-up ANOVAs
for the Effect of Sex

God image factors

	Males		Females		ANOVAs	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F(1,179)	p
<u>Benevolent</u>						
Nonabused	4.47	0.56	4.49	0.67	1.20	0.99
Sexually	5.50	0.71	4.48	0.58		
Physically	4.36	0.70	4.68	0.41		
Psychologically	4.40	0.76	4.52	0.55		
Multiabused	4.21	0.92	4.61	0.74		
<u>Omni</u>						
Nonabused	3.38	0.64	3.31	0.56	1.35	0.99
Sexually	2.92	0.35	3.19	0.86		
Physically	3.31	1.01	3.41	0.71		
Psychologically	3.30	0.75	3.62	0.78		
Multiabused	3.48	0.79	3.74	0.66		
<u>Guiding</u>						
Nonabused	4.32	0.79	4.32	0.88	5.15	0.15
Sexually	3.75	1.53	4.45	0.62		
Physically	4.26	0.95	4.69	0.37		
Psychologically	4.25	0.73	4.64	0.48		
Multiabused	4.08	0.91	4.48	0.72		
<u>Stable</u>						
Nonabused	4.03	1.04	3.94	0.90	0.12	0.99
Sexually	4.25	1.06	3.86	1.07		
Physically	4.29	0.95	4.14	0.80		
Psychologically	4.20	0.68	4.50	0.63		
Multiabused	4.16	0.88	4.18	0.82		
<u>Powerful</u>						
Nonabused	4.33	0.65	4.53	0.61	3.97	0.29
Sexually	3.50	0.71	4.50	0.58		
Physically	4.57	0.79	4.40	0.81		
Psychologically	4.25	0.72	4.64	0.60		
Multiabused	4.30	1.00	4.56	0.82		
<u>Caring</u>						
Nonabused	3.91	0.72	3.82	0.77	0.02	0.99
Sexually	4.00	0.47	3.67	0.43		
Physically	3.67	1.02	3.93	0.48		
Psychologically	3.83	0.69	4.15	0.52		
Multiabused	3.85	0.75	3.81	0.75		

Positive father image factors were examined using type of abuse and sex of the participant as independent variables (see Table 11). Sex of the participant was not a significant effect ($F(6,162) = 0.96, p > .45$); neither was the interaction between sex and type of abuse significant ($F(24,660) = 0.77, p > .77$). Type of abused did have a significant effect on the factors ($F(24,660) = 1.89, p < .007$). Follow-up ANOVAs (see Table 11) showed that differences existed on the benevolent, guiding, and caring factors. Scheffe's procedure was conducted on each of the significant factors to identify which groups differed. On the benevolent factor, nonabused and multiabused participants were significantly different, with the nonabused participants viewing their fathers as more benevolent. Nonabused participants also saw their fathers as being more guiding than the multiabused participants. Finally, multiabused participants viewed their fathers as less caring than nonabused and physically abused participants.

The last MANOVA examined the positive mother image factors by sex of the participant and type of abuse (see Table 12). The main effect of sex was insignificant ($F(6,168) = 0.80, p > .57$), as was the sex by type of abuse interaction ($F(24,684) = 1.21, p > .22$). Type of abuse did have a significant effect across positive mother images ($F(24,684) = 1.97, p < .004$). Bonferroni's correction was used for follow-up ANOVAs on each of the positive mother image factors (see Table 12). Three of the factors showed significant differences among the groups: benevolent, guiding, and powerful. Scheffe's procedure was again used to compare the groups on each of the factors. The benevolent factor had a significant difference between the nonabused and multiabused groups. Specifically, the nonabused group saw their mothers as more benevolent than the

Table 11

Means and Standard Deviations of Positive Father Image Factors by Type of Abuse and Sex and the ANOVAs for the Type of Abuse Effect

Father Image Factors

	Males			Females			ANOVAs	
	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	F(1,179)	p
<u>Benevolent</u>								
Nonabused	4.21	0.52	13	3.87	0.63	33	4.20	0.018*
Sexually	3.56	0.19	3	3.67	0.52	8		
Physically	3.77	0.54	8	3.88	0.83	17		
Psychologically	3.74	0.52	11	3.82	0.40	12		
Multiabused	3.48	0.69	27	3.48	0.86	45		
<u>Omni</u>								
Nonabused	2.73	0.99		2.75	0.42		.16	0.999
Sexually	2.89	0.67		2.33	0.60			
Physically	2.52	0.69		2.77	0.59			
Psychologically	2.97	0.74		2.47	0.88			
Multiabused	2.76	0.56		2.55	0.69			
<u>Guiding</u>								
Nonabused	4.47	0.49		4.09	0.80		6.17	0.002*
Sexually	3.78	0.59		3.81	0.52			
Physically	3.92	0.68		4.10	0.91			
Psychologically	4.08	0.63		4.04	0.71			
Multiabused	3.36	0.95		3.55	1.08			
<u>Stable</u>								
Nonabused	4.50	0.58		4.24	0.65		3.26	0.078
Sexually	4.33	0.29		4.44	0.42			
Physically	4.44	0.42		4.29	0.64			
Psychologically	4.18	0.93		3.67	1.27			
Multiabused	3.89	1.27		3.73	1.04			
<u>Powerful</u>								
Nonabused	4.31	0.48		4.06	0.77		1.64	0.999
Sexually	3.50	0.87		3.75	1.04			
Physically	3.94	0.68		3.82	0.95			
Psychologically	3.86	0.78		3.92	0.73			
Multiabused	3.76	0.95		3.74	1.03			
<u>Caring</u>								
Nonabused	3.97	0.57		3.57	0.60		5.65	0.002*
Sexually	3.33	0.33		3.29	0.77			
Physically	3.83	0.50		3.84	0.78			
Psychologically	3.82	0.60		3.47	0.52			
Multiabused	3.11	0.89		3.29	0.83			

*Significant at the .05 level

Table 12

Means and Standard Deviations of Positive Mother Image Factors by Type of Abuse and Sex and the ANOVAs for the Type of Abuse Effect

Mother image factors

	Males			Females			ANOVAs	
	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	<i>F</i> (1,179)	<i>p</i>
<u>Benevolent</u>								
Nonabused	4.23	0.37	16	4.04	0.52	35	4.03	0.024*
Sexually	4.00	0.29	3	3.96	0.42	8		
Physically	3.67	0.54	8	4.12	0.40	18		
Psychologically	3.78	0.47	10	3.83	0.53	11		
Multiabused	3.69	0.71	27	3.64	0.81	47		
<u>Omni</u>								
Nonabused	2.69	0.80		2.75	0.56		0.33	0.999
Sexually	2.56	0.19		2.79	0.74			
Physically	2.44	0.62		3.02	0.71			
Psychologically	2.68	0.60		2.53	0.68			
Multiabused	2.79	0.62		2.79	0.71			
<u>Guiding</u>								
Nonabused	4.41	0.43		4.32	0.51		4.23	0.018*
Sexually	4.11	0.35		4.54	0.43			
Physically	4.23	0.42		4.44	0.40			
Psychologically	4.10	0.46		4.33	0.59			
Multiabused	3.95	0.67		3.88	0.89			
<u>Stable</u>								
Nonabused	3.31	0.70		2.86	0.86		1.09	0.999
Sexually	2.83	0.29		3.00	1.07			
Physically	3.13	0.79		3.44	0.71			
Psychologically	2.80	0.79		2.77	0.96			
Multiabused	2.91	0.86		3.05	0.87			
<u>Powerful</u>								
Nonabused	4.03	0.43		3.49	0.84		4.18	0.018*
Sexually	3.33	0.58		3.56	0.90			
Physically	3.88	0.74		3.89	0.85			
Psychologically	3.25	1.01		2.77	0.85			
Multiabused	3.28	0.74		3.55	0.93			
<u>Caring</u>								
Nonabused	3.92	0.49		3.72	0.42		3.00	0.120
Sexually	3.22	0.96		3.71	0.52			
Physically	3.67	0.71		3.96	0.44			
Psychologically	3.67	0.39		3.49	0.84			
Multiabused	3.65	0.62		3.49	0.84			

*Significant at the .05 level

multiabused group. The multiabused group also saw their mothers as less guiding than the physically abused and nonabused groups. Lastly, physically abused participants viewed their mothers as more powerful than psychologically abused participants.

A set of hierarchical regression analyses was conducted to identify sets of variables that could predict God images (see Table 13). Variables were entered in the following six sets: (1) father image factor scores (2) mother image factor scores (3) abused and FACES II (4) self-esteem scores (5) type of abuse classification (6) FACES II. These variable sets significantly predicted eight of eleven God image factors: benevolent, wrathful, guiding, false, deistic, worthless, powerful, and condemning. An examination of the results indicated that the set of mother image variables was significant in predicting a number of God image variables: benevolent, guiding, false, deistic, worthless, powerful, and condemning. First, the benevolent factor was significantly predicted ($F(11) = 4.17, p < .000$). An examination of the beta weights for specific variables in the equation showed that the false mother image ($B = -.37$) and the benevolent mother image ($B = .40$) were significant predictors of a benevolent God image. The less false and the more benevolent the view of the mother, the more benevolent the view of God.

The set of mother image variables were significant predictors of the false God image factor ($F(11) = 3.32, p < .0005$). The false mother image ($B = .29$) was the individual variable that significantly predicted the false God image. The more false the image of the mother, the more false the God image.

Table 13

Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting God Images

God image factor	df	ΔR^2	F	p
<u>Benevolent</u>				
Father images	11	0.024	0.439	0.936
Mother images	11	0.231	4.175	0.000*
Abuse and family	4	0.033	1.636	0.169
RSES	1	0.003	0.688	0.408
Physical abuse	1	0.009	1.849	0.176
Psychol. abuse	1	0.000	0.062	0.804
Sexual abuse	1	0.012	2.362	0.127
FACES II	1	0.013	2.601	0.109
$R^2 = 0.36, F(27,127) = 2.68, p < 0.001$				
<u>Wrathful</u>				
Father images	11	0.128	2.091	0.025*
Mother images	11	0.063	1.033	0.421
Abuse and family	4	0.029	1.326	0.264
RSES	1	0.003	0.486	0.487
Physical abuse	1	0.018	3.159	0.078
Psychol. abuse	1	0.004	0.653	0.421
Sexual abuse	1	0.016	2.822	0.095
FACES II	1	0.002	0.447	0.505
$R^2 = 0.29, F(27,127) = 1.96, p < 0.007$				
<u>Omni</u>				
Father images	11	0.104	1.574	0.114
Mother images	11	0.087	1.315	0.223
Abuse and family	4	0.015	0.614	0.654
RSES	1	0.001	0.143	0.706
Physical abuse	1	0.000	0.057	0.812
Psychol. abuse	1	0.007	1.280	0.260
Sexual abuse	1	0.000	0.071	0.790
FACES II	1	0.002	0.491	0.485
$R^2 = 0.24, F(27,127) = 1.46, p > 0.08$				
<u>Guiding</u>				
Father images	11	0.026	0.416	0.947
Mother images	11	0.157	2.527	0.007*
Abuse and family	4	0.011	0.507	0.731
RSES	1	0.000	0.037	0.849
Physical abuse	1	0.006	1.101	0.296
Psychol. abuse	1	0.000	0.076	0.784
Sexual abuse	1	0.002	0.390	0.534
FACES II	1	0.001	0.117	0.733
$R^2 = 0.28, F(27,127) = 1.84, p < 0.01$				

God image factor	df	ΔR^2	F	p
<u>False</u>				
Father images	11	0.032	0.504	0.898
Mother images	11	0.208	3.318	0.001*
Abuse and family	4	0.031	1.383	0.244
RSES	1	0.001	0.089	0.766
Physical abuse	1	0.010	1.696	0.197
Psychol. abuse	1	0.000	0.036	0.849
Sexual abuse	1	0.007	1.181	0.279
FACES II	1	0.011	1.915	0.169
$R^2 = 0.28, F(27,127) = 1.81, p < 0.02$				
<u>Stable</u>				
Father images	11	0.043	0.661	0.773
Mother images	11	0.135	2.055	0.028
Abuse and family	4	0.051	2.147	0.079
RSES	1	0.004	0.643	0.424
Physical abuse	1	0.000	0.017	0.896
Psychol. abuse	1	0.000	0.034	0.853
Sexual abuse	1	0.031	5.247	0.024
FACES II	1	0.017	2.883	0.092
$R^2 = 0.24, F(27,127) = 1.52, p < 0.07$				
<u>Deistic</u>				
Father images	11	0.069	1.134	0.341
Mother images	11	0.142	2.335	0.012*
Abuse and family	4	0.037	1.661	0.163
RSES	1	0.007	1.222	0.271
Physical abuse	1	0.004	0.636	0.427
Psychol. abuse	1	0.004	0.771	0.382
Sexual abuse	1	0.029	5.154	0.025*
FACES II	1	0.007	1.230	0.270
$R^2 = 0.30, F(27,127) = 1.98, p < 0.01$				
<u>Worthless</u>				
Father images	11	0.031	0.528	0.882
Mother images	11	0.211	3.650	0.000*
Abuse and family	4	0.049	2.315	0.061
RSES	1	0.000	0.050	0.823
Physical abuse	1	0.005	1.027	0.313
Psychol. abuse	1	0.000	0.038	0.846
Sexual abuse	1	0.034	6.398	0.013*
FACES II	1	0.010	1.939	0.166
$R^2 = .33, F(27,127) = 2.35, p < .001$				

God image factor	df	ΔR^2	F	p
<u>Powerful</u>				
Father images	11	0.073	1.263	0.253
Mother images	11	0.158	2.730	0.003*
Abuse and family	4	0.037	1.754	0.142
RSES	1	0.000	0.057	0.812
Physical abuse	1	0.004	0.725	0.396
Psychol. abuse	1	0.006	1.215	0.272
Sexual abuse	1	0.010	1.987	0.161
FACES II	1	0.007	1.379	0.243

$$R^2 = 0.33, F(27, 127) = 2.34, p < 0.001$$

<u>Condemning</u>				
Father images	11	0.082	1.375	0.193
Mother images	11	0.130	2.190	0.019*
Abuse and family	4	0.021	0.951	0.437
RSES	1	0.000	0.005	0.946
Physical abuse	1	0.018	3.271	0.073
Psychol. abuse	1	0.007	1.334	0.250
Sexual abuse	1	0.000	0.010	0.922
FACES II	1	0.000	0.053	0.819

$$R^2 = 0.31, F(27, 127) = 2.15, p < 0.003$$

<u>Caring</u>				
Father images	11	0.032	0.455	0.927
Mother images	11	0.099	1.409	0.176
Abuse and family	4	0.005	0.214	0.930
RSES	1	0.012	1.900	0.171
Physical abuse	1	0.000	0.001	0.977
Psychol. abuse	1	0.002	0.332	0.566
Sexual abuse	1	0.002	0.359	0.550
FACES II	1	0.000	0.044	0.835

$$R^2 = 0.19, F(27, 127) = 1.12, p > 0.33$$

*Significant at the .05 level

Note. Abuse and family includes physical, psychological, and sexual abuse scores and scores on the FACES II.

The deistic God image was also predicted by the set of mother image variables ($F(11) = 2.34, p < .01$). The individual mother variables that were predictive of this factor were the deistic ($B = .35$) and benevolent ($B = -.34$) mother images. The less benevolent and the more deistic the view of the mother, the more deistic the view of God.

The set of mother image variables also was predictive of the view of God as worthless ($F(11) = 3.65, p < .0002$). The individual mother variable that was predictive was the false mother image ($B = .29$). The more false the view of the mother, the more worthless the view of God.

The set of mother image variables were again significant in predicting the condemning God image ($F(11) = 2.19, p < .019$). The deistic ($B = .25$) and condemning ($B = .49$) mother images significantly predicted the condemning God image. Therefore, the more deistic and condemning the view of the mother, the more condemning the view of God.

For the images of God as guiding and powerful, the set of mother image variables again were predictive (guiding $F(11) = 2.53, p < .006$; powerful $F(11) = 2.73, p < .003$). However, none of the variables individually predicted these God image factors.

Sexual abuse was predictive of two God images. First, sexual abuse scores predicted a deistic God image ($F(1) = 5.15, p < .02, B = .23$). Second, the worthless God image was predicted by sexual abuse scores ($F(1) = 6.40, p < .013, B = .24$). Thus, the more sexual abuse that occurred, the more deistic and worthless the view of God.

The set of father image variables was significant in predicting the wrathful God image ($F(11) = 2.09, p < .03$). The benevolent ($B = -.41$) and wrathful ($B = .33$) father images were the individual variables that were predictive of the wrathful God image. The less benevolent and the more wrathful the view of the father, the more wrathful the view of God.

CHAPTER IV

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine images of God held by abused and nonabused participants. This study further examined differences between abused and nonabused participants' views of their parents, family, and self. It was hypothesized that abused participants would view their parents, families, God, and themselves more negatively than nonabused participants.

The results of this study offered some support for two of the hypotheses. First, hypothesis one, that abused participants would view God more negatively than nonabused participants, received some support. It was found that the two groups did not differ on the negative or positive images when categorical distinctions were made. However, the regression analysis, which used continuous data, did demonstrate a relationship between sexual abuse and deistic and worthless God images. Thus, as the degree of sexual abuse increases, the images of God as deistic and worthless also increase. These results support the previous findings of Justice (1984), that persons who have been sexually abused view God more negatively.

The reason for only sexually abused persons and not other abused persons reflecting a more negative image of God is unknown, however some possible explanations are available. It may be that the occurrence of sexual abuse is much more traumatic than other forms of abuse. The trauma from the sexual abuse may be severe enough to alter the individuals perceptions of God. It may also be possible that the sexually abused person feels that God did not protect him/her from the sexual trauma. The lack of protection from God could be reflected in the view

of God as deistic or impersonal and worthless. Lastly, it may be that the occurrence of sexual abuse interferes with the third stage of Fowler's development of faith (Fowler, 1981). This third stage is synthetic-convention faith, in which the God image is based on interpersonal qualities and comes from what the person has been taught and from what he/she feels. Fowler suggests that deficiencies in this stage can create despair about a personal God, which would be a deistic God image as found in sexually abused persons.

The absence of significant findings for the God images using dichotomous categorizations of abused and nonabused was surprising due to the support found for differences in parental and family views between the two groups. The negative father and mother images and the FACES II scores were different for abused and nonabused participants. Specifically, abused participants viewed their mothers as more false, worthless, and condemning, their fathers as more condemning, and their families as having less cohesion and adaptability than nonabused participants. In addition, differences were found between the two groups on positive mother and father images. Specifically, abused participants saw their mothers and fathers as less benevolent and their fathers as less guiding than nonabused participants. Therefore, these results add to the research demonstrating that people who have been abused view their parents more negatively than nonabused persons (Cole & Woolger, 1989; Halperin, 1983; Herzberger, Potts, & Dillon, 1981). This research goes further than past research by identifying specifically where the differences occur. Also, these findings support previous research on the perceived poor functioning of abusive families (Harter et al., 1988; Williamson et al., 1991).

A surprising result of this study was that the parental images were significantly different between the abused and nonabused groups but the God images did not differ. Previous research on God images had suggested that parental images are represented in God images (Birky & Ball, 1985; Justice & Lambert, 1986; Nelson, 1971; Spilka, Addison, & Rosensohn, 1975; Tamayo & Dugas, 1977; Vergote & Aubert, 1972; Vergote et al., 1969). Also, family functioning was shown to influence God images (Potvin, 1977; Edwards et al., 1992). It was demonstrated that the abused group did view their parents and family more negatively, however, these negative views were not reflected in more negative God images. These findings suggest that more factors may be contributing to the image of God. Parental and family images may contribute to the image of God, but other factors, such as religious learning, may have a larger impact on a person's God image.

The hierarchical regression analysis demonstrated that the mother image variables were most predictive of God images. This finding again brings into question the results of the insignificant difference between abused and nonabused participants on the God images. It was found that abused participants viewed their mothers more negatively than nonabused participants. Based on the regression results, it would be expected that the differences between the groups on the mother images would also be reflected in the God images. However, this was not found. It is possible that differences between the groups on their God images did not appear due to the small sample size and uneven group sizes.

Past research demonstrated that maternal qualities are correlated with God images (Nelson, 1971; Spilka, Addison, & Rosensohn, 1975; Tamayo & Dugas,

1977). Thus, this research supports the relationship between maternal qualities and God images when continuous data is used. The lack of paternal factors predicting God images is explained through past research. Vergote and Aubert (1972) and Vergote et al. (1969) demonstrated that the paternal qualities assigned to God were not the same as those given to fathers. Thus, this research supports the idea that images of the father and God are not similar; however images of the mother are predictive of God images.

Given that abused and nonabused participants differed in their images of their parents, these differences were further examined. Abused participants saw their mothers as more unfaithful, unimportant, weak, nonwarm, worthless, cruel, avenging, controlling, critical, damning, unforgiving, unloving, unmerciful, and unrighteous than nonabused participants. When looking at type of abuse, multiabused participants saw their mothers more negatively on all five of the negative mother factors and two of the six positive mother factors as compared to those with no abuse. Further differences occurred depending on the type of abuse. Specifically, participants who had been multiabused saw their mothers as more false, deistic, worthless, and condemning and as more guiding than physically abused participants. Also, participants who had been multiabused viewed their mothers as more deistic and condemning than sexually abused participants. A last finding concerning the mother image was the difference between physically abused and psychologically abused participants on the powerful factor. The physically abused participants saw their mothers as more powerful than psychologically abused participants. This finding may be due to the overt power exerted in the form

of physical abuse while psychological abuse may exist as a more covert form of abuse.

Abused participants, compared to nonabused participants, viewed their fathers as more avenging, controlling, critical, cruel, damning, unforgiving, nonloving, unmerciful, unrighteous, weak, nongentle, unguiding, nonhelpful, unmoving, nonprotective, and unsupporting. When considering type of abuse, multiabused participants saw their fathers more negatively on four of the five negative father image factors and three of the six positive father factors. Specifically, multiabused participants saw their fathers as more false, deistic, worthless, and condemning and less benevolent, guiding, and caring than nonabused participants. Multiabused participants also saw their fathers as more false and less caring than those physically abused.

Thus, mothers and fathers were viewed more negatively by abused participants than nonabused participants. This appeared to be especially true for persons who had been in multiabuse situations. The multiabuse situations were demonstrated to be the most harmful to positive perceptions of parents. These findings are logical considering that perception of parents are based on parental behaviors. Therefore, the person experiencing abuse from their parents would reflect those experiences in description of their parents. Also, persons with multiabuse more than single abuse would reflect this due to having more abusive experiences upon which to base their perceptions.

A final interesting finding from this research was the lack of a significant difference between the abused and nonabused groups on self-esteem. This finding was contradictory to previous research that has shown differences in self-esteem

between abused and nonabused persons (Briere & Runtz, 1990; German et al., 1990; Oates et al., 1985; Pantle & Oegema, 1990). These findings suggested that the abuse classification may not have been accurate. The dichotomous classification of participants into abused or nonabused groups did not allow for persons in the mid-range of scores to be questionable classifications. Another possible explanation could be that the RSES may not have been a valid test of self-esteem for this population. Participants may have been able to distinguish the socially desirable responses to the RSES questions. Therefore, the RSES may have been assessing participants' ability to respond in a socially appropriate manner, rather than their self-esteem. Lastly, the RSES scores showed restriction of range. The mean score on the RSES was 4.82 (scores ranged from 1-6) with a standard deviation of 1.24. Thus, the scores were all fairly high, which limits the variability of the scores and thus lowers the possibility of finding significant differences.

This research has various implication. First, God images may be affected by sexual abuse. Specifically, individuals who have experienced multiple sexual abuse situations may view God as more deistic and worthless. However, physically abused, psychologically abused, multiply abused, and nonabused persons do not see God differently. For these groups, parental images and family functioning were not reflected in God images. The question remains as to why only persons who experienced sexual abuse and not other forms of abuse view God more negatively.

Second, it was shown that adult participants viewed their abusive parents more negatively than nonabusive parents. It appeared that a common view of parents by abused participants was that of condemning and non-benevolent. These

findings parallel previous research that abusive parents are viewed negatively by their children (Cole & Woolger, 1989; Halperin, 1983; Herzberger et al., 1981). However, this research identified more specific descriptors used to describe abusive parents. These findings could aid professionals working with abused clients by helping them understand the perceptions held by an abused client.

Several limitations of this study need to be examined. First, the reliability and validity on the God, father, and mother image questionnaires is questionable. Reliability of the questionnaires has not been identified in this or any study. The questionnaire has been used on testing God images, but has not been used on the parents prior to this research. Therefore, it is not known whether the questionnaires on the parents were accurately identifying the various parental images of God images. Another problem with the questionnaires is the adjectives used. This researcher found that many of the participants had difficulty understanding the meaning of the words and how the words applied to the given parent or God. These points question the validity of these questionnaires.

Second, the validity of the Family Environment Questionnaire as a measure of physical and psychological abuse may be questioned. Because the FEQ is a self-report measure and asks questions of a highly personal nature, accurate placement of participants into abused and nonabused categories depends upon honest and open responses from the participants. In addition, there are no firm cutoff scores to use to classify participants as abused and nonabused. It is possible that use of a different method than the one used in this study to classify participants might lead to different results. However, the groups of abused and nonabused participants did differ in perceptions of their families (as measured by the FACES II questionnaire),

which is consistent with the research literature in this area and lends support to the validity of the classification method.

A third limitation of this study was the relatively small sample size. The entire sample consisted of 177 participants, however, 20 of the participants did not complete the God image questionnaire due to nonbelief in God. Also, eight of the participants did not respond to the father image questionnaire and two did not respond to the mother image questionnaire. This small sample limits the generalizability of the results. Another problem with the small sample size is the uneven groups of abused ($n = 131$) and nonabused ($n = 46$) participants. This uneven distribution may have caused the F statistics to be liberal or conservative, and thus the null hypotheses may have been rejected or accepted falsely depending on the group variance.

The last limitation of this research is the use of self report measures. The use of these measures leaves room for the influence of social desirability in answering the questions. The effect of social desirability may have caused the participants to answer questions as they thought they should, not as they honestly believed. Therefore, the results may reflect socially acceptable beliefs, not accurate responses.

Future research can correct for some of this study's limitation. One improvement would be to use participants who clearly have been abused and match them with participants who have not been abused. In order to accomplish this a clinical sample or a sample drawn from the state's child protective agency could be used. This step would allow for clearer distinctions between those persons who had been abused from those with no abuse.

Second, the God and parent questionnaires need to be refined. The use of common adjectives or descriptives would be helpful in understanding the actual views held of God and the parents. Upon the development of new adjectives, reliability and validity studies need to be done. The research in the God image area seriously lacks in having valid and reliable measures. Once reliable and valid measures are established, consistency across studies in this field could be accomplished.

The use of computer tasks could greatly improve the study of God images. Social cognition has begun to rely heavily on computer tasks to understand schemas for certain areas. The research on God images is the same as trying to understand what a person's schema is for God. Therefore, it could be valuable to follow the research techniques used by social cognitive researchers to understand the God schema. for example, a common technique used by social cognitive researchers is the use of a priming technique. This technique involves presenting a category word, such as God. The presentation of the category primes the category for the person. After the prime is presented, an adjective is presented, and the person is asked to respond if the adjective is descriptive of the category. This technique allows the researcher to identify which adjectives were considered descriptive of the category, and also how long it took for the person to make his/her decision. The reaction time to the adjective is considered important because it is believed that the shorter the reaction time the more the person sees the adjective as being or not being descriptive of the category. This technique could greatly improve the validity of God image studies.

Future research could look further at possible determinants of images of God. This study suggests that the images of the parents and the family are not key determinants of God images. This finding is contradictory to past research in the field. Although images of the parents were different between abused and nonabused participants, their God images were not different. Therefore, other variables may be influencing God images. The abused individual may be basing their God image on another variable that has not been identified. For example, the stress from the abusive home may create a need for the abused person to seek spiritual guidance. This outside variable may be compensating for the negative parental images and family environment, thus making the abused person's God image similar to the nonabused person's image.

In conclusion, this research has demonstrated that participants in this study who experienced more abusive family environments did not view God differently than participants who did not have abusive family environments. However, differences were found between abused and nonabused participants on their images of their parents. It appeared from this study that the mother image was the most predictive of God images and sexual abuse was predictive of the view of God as deistic and worthless. This research had some limitations, but does add to the research on God images and the perceptions of persons who have been abused.

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